



Blood from the Stone



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Chapter 1 by Batsup

This is a speech that shall last for ever, echoing throughout the eons. All energy is reused, therefore its use shall be marked. Now go on, all of you go, and make an echo!

---Mikhail

"C'mon Maikeru!! I wanna check out the cave system." Whined Mikhail. "If you don't come...I'm still going, you promised Maikeru. You promised to go today!" Whimpered the eight-year old Mikhail, the apprentice to Maikeru. Maikeru looked up and laughed. The armor Mikhail had been forced to wear off-balanced him in a comical way, causing him great discomfort, and at that moment Mikhail had launched the plates of metal across the room with a burst of anger, revealing his red-plaid shirt he wore over his purple "T". "Hmph! Much better. That felt heavy as my travel bag for school!" Mikhail exclaimed as Maikeru got up. Mikhail was forcing Maikeru to come and watch him at the cave system, with his fellow eight-year old friend, Grayson tagging along.

"...And then the big dragon ate Grayson!" Mikhail said, cheerfully jumping around irritatingly. "I don't like this story..." muttered Grayson. "Come along now, the cave is right here. Grayson do as you like, Mikhail can explore the cave...I am so tired lately!" said Maikeru as he yawned and sat to watch after the children. "Thank the gods it's friday! Sunday through next Saturday is Gustaf's turn."

After a quarter hour Grayson spoke from his freshly made leaf-fort. "Maikeru...Mikhail has been in there an awful lot of time. The air pressure may have knocked him out..." Grayson spoke, began nervously kicking out of the pile with his feet. Noticing Grayson's obvious distress, Maikeru got up, nonchalantly sheathing the sword he'd been examining. "Okay Grayson, i'll

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jotun spoke. "I never'd thought I could have my rematch with you old chum!" laughed the jotun-or giant, who was once a nemesis of Maikeru's. "Hands off my apprentice....You remember how sharp I like to keep my swords." Maikeru challenged, the giant flinching at the memory.

The jotun stood his ground at the threat, realizing that Maikeru was older now, weaker than his youthful self. Maikeru smiled. "I'm still strong enough to beat you, don't you remember that I kept training since my team's disbandment?"

The jotun dropped Mikhail, looking on at Maikeru like a savage. "Consider yourself lucky i'm only fighting you, the more meat for the clan the merrier...." murmured the giant. "Don't worry, i'm not scared of you, halfborn. No death feels like the pain my blades will cause you, so I'll be fine, now run Mikhail!" Maikeru shouted, his apprentice looking on in fear. Mikhail ran out telling Grayson to run, then Mikhail turned around, suddenly feeling enraged. This couldn't be happening. "Just try and hurt my master you meany, I'll show you what he's taught me!" Mikhail raged.

Mikhail stormed into the cave, his button-down getting tossed aside, disappearing in darkness. "Grr..what are you trying to do to my master." he questioned rhetorically, preparing to strike. "Now, get ready to taste my fury!" Mikhail called, running full tilt at the jotun. The hut sized Necrofall crashed of the the edge of the chasm as Mikhail dropped his shoulder into the giant like a professional, the jotun and Maikeru began to fall into the void. "Maikeru! No!" Bat cried. "It's my fault isn't it....Maikeru...."

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"Owww..the jotun must've bitten off my...my leg..." Maikeru muttered. "I'm all alone...thank the gods Mikhail pushed away Necrofall or i would've..." Maikeru yelled as a sharp pain went up the stub of his mangled leg. "No...oh no Maikeru, I'm still alive! I'll be keeping you company..." the jotun spoke, though Maikeru quickly noticed it was writhing with pain and covered with rocks. "You must know why I'm here, Maikeru. I am planning on summoning Shawv of the Stone." Mikhail began to move into a sitting position. "But you need blood from the offering stone! Down here there is no youthful offering for the stone, and the stone cannot make blood for you lord's summoning!" Maikeru chuckled softly. "But yet i do have the stone in my satchel, I was

planning on using it on your apprentices!" yelled the buried jotun. Maikeru shuddered at remembered seeing the stone used by the stone, only symbols or in this case, a jotun lord. Maikeru knew that if he died, he'd have nothing to leave behind for his adopted children.

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"But you have neither of my sons. They are safe and shall survive long after we have died." Maikeru said, trying to reassure himself. "Oh....how sad. You didn't realise there are others looking for him, those who aren't trapped....,"

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"G-Grays-son! Maikeru fell with the jotun, an-and he...may have d-died!" cried Mikhail as he neared Maikeru's house. Mikhail was shivering, choked off by the tears that were pouring out of his bloodshot eyes. Grayson looked up in shock, then regained his composure. "So what!?" Grayson replied irritably. "I'm used to this....mourning is a stupid thing to do, Shoulder-Blades." he insulted.

Mikhail looked on in disbelief. He knew Grayson had his fair share of remorse built up, he looked constrained, making himself angry so not to focus on the fact that the only master that ever cared for him has possibly died. Mikhail looked on, now angry at Grayson looking so...emotionless.

Mikhail ran up to Grayson, thrusting his palm to Grayson's face. Grayson instinctively put his hands up in self defence, but found himself utterly duped as Mikhail used the momentum to grab at Grayson's legs. Young Grayson yelped as Mikhail thrust his shoulder into Grayson, using his momentum to knock down Grayson. As the shock left Grayson, Bat had already mounted himself above Grayson, holding down his hands and crossing his feet to tighten his hold on Grayson.

"Cry Grayson!" Mikhail shouted. Grayson looked up in confusion: "No?" Grayson replied, still bewildered. "Crying helps Grayson. It relieves stress and emotional build up. You need this most." Mikhail spoke, easing his grip on Grayson. "Think about what happened!"

Grayson looked on at Mikhail rising off of him. "But he just may have died who..." Grayson began to tear up. "Maikeru..." he whispered, tears streaming down his face. After that Grayson had walked up to Mikhail.

"Thank you, friend. That...That was much appreciated. Grayson spoke, his posture easing into a more comfortable position. Mikhail smiled "It'll be okay! Gustaf is coming the day after tomorrow! We'll stay at the house, but while we're at it, my story! So...then the big dragon ate Grayson, and then Grayson burped! The dragon exploded. The end." Mikhail said cheerfully. "I

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They ate dumplings happily, Mikhail gave Grayson the nickname 'Dumpling'. Gustaf being a food alchemist the food was always superb, so no one was surprised, just delighted. "Gustaf..." the two children looked up, Mikhail wearing a hangdog expression. "Maikeru was fighting a jotun to protect us, and he fell into a chasm with the jotun..." Mikhail spoke, knowing that he may have killed Maikeru. Gustaf looked up in shock, then spoke: "Then i'll have a 24/7 job I guess...Maikeru is probably in a better place now...if not...I doubt it" Gustaf said. Gustaf and Maikeru were old friends, Gustaf was definitely hiding his utter disbelief and sorrow. Mikhail and Grayson looked at each other, they nodded, knowing Gustaf was trying to be strong.

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"Since you have a survival teacher, myself, and have no one to teach you combat, we need to find you plenty of combat masters!" Gustaf spoke, his eyes outlined with the dark shroud of unrest. "Here, each of you may take 12 Banded-Crater each, find people that you are comfortable with being taught by, I want you write down their names so I can evaluate if they are capable of being gentle or appropriate with you. Now go out into town, and find yourselves some teachers!" Gustaf lectured, without his usual food-references. The two children took the copper banded cups gingerly, staring in awe at the high-rate currency. "Time to find me some sparring partners! Also should learn how to control magic..." Mikhail inferred, running down the hill laughing as he fell and tumbled along. "Maybe I can finally find a decent alchemist to be my mentor..." Grayson spoke, softly pronouncing the still hopeful words, charging after Mikhail.

"Dumpling!" Mikhail called back to his wheezing friend. "I'm going to that Martial-Arts building, see you soon!" After running down the street -silently gasping for air- Mikhail turned the corner, running full tilt into the combat school's equipment room door. "Oww!" he cried, taking a moment to catch his breath, Mikhail looked up. "Is there anyplace here I can sign up for..." He took another huffing breathe. "classes..."

A women behind a sign in desk stood up. "Here little buddy, just let me get a signup paper, but I don't think you should sign up without an adult." She answered kindly. "Thanks Miss! I was planning on coming again with Gustaf, my care taker, later today. By the way, Miss, my name is Mikhail." He announced proudly, sticking out his small chest. "Okay..Mikhail, nice name. Sounds foreign. Also I guess I should tell you, my name is Monica."

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caretaker, sir. I am an apprentice and I wish to pay the alchemist for training!" Grayson shouted, the guard nodding, going into the castle to speak with the alchemist...

Mikhail had ran out of the school. He was running into the large library in town square. "The best mentors of all time, books, scrolls, and just about all writing material." He said to himself. He began to walk amongst the books when he found what he needed: a paper with a list of Gracie Jiu-Jitsu moves, a Taekwondo booklet, and finally, several large dusty books of Rune magic...

Grayson shuddered as a large thud sounded from the wall of the dungeon. They walked on for a while when they reached a corridor. A scratchy voice came from the door to Grayson's left. "Duck!" Called an old fellow jumping through the door. As the man leapt through the door a blue gas rushed to fill the room behind him. After a few long seconds the guard coughed. "Ehem... the alchemist" he said as the awkward man rose from the dogpile. Grayson looked upon the man, "It's an honor to meet you, sir."

Mikhail arrived home earlier than he had expected. "Ohh yeah! School's next week!" Mikhail shouted happily to himself, hands on hips and a smug smile. He rushed out the door. "Could. I have. School. Stuff?" Mikhail asked the salesclerk, panting. Having ran from the hill to the store. The man told him happily that the office section should have supplies. Mikhail looked through the rows of items. He saw the much needed feather pens, ink, papyrus and even parchment. "Here you go!" Mikhail said happily, depositing one Banded-Crater as he hauled off with the calligraphy ink, Cardinal feather pen, papyrus, parchment, and large paperless inventions called binders...

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The week was through and it was time for school. "See ya Gustaf, gonna go learn 'bout things!" Bat called as he ran out the door. "Bye Gustaf, gotta go to school!" Grayson spoke. Gustaf smiled in a mellow fashion, the children had his kingdom-famous chocolate brownies packed for dessert!

After a long introduction, Grayson and Mikhail found themselves a group of friends. Their names were Elo, Nik, and Thoms, all decently smart kids who understood the mumbo jumbo of

Grayson and Mikhail's Tales

After the long day it was time for classes and Grayson to the

Alchemists. Mikhail ran through the streets his way to the mat Mikhail began feeling self-conscious

Thoms! Bat cried ecstatically

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“Hey Mishen!” He answered excitedly. “What brings you here?” Thoms asked. “I need to learn fighting so I can carry on my fathers’ legacies for a bit, so I gotta learn fighting.” Mikhail replied hurriedly, class had started.

“My legs hurt!” Mikhail complained, walking into the house. Gustaf looked up at the exhausted adopted son. “Well you should go to bed, Grayson’s already hit the hay, something to do with learning a dismemberment spell...” Mikhail smiled tiredly. “Well g’night...that bat guano sure is noxious..” Mikhail wandered “Noxious! What have you been doing?!” Gustaf shouted, Grayson heard mumbling in protest from his bed. “The bats are so cute and I wanna be a biologist...” Replied Mikhail, fighting the urge to collapse. “I see....well I guess I can’t teach you guide to common food plants...” Gustaf spoke listfully.

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Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.

-Winston Churchill

Thirteen year-old Mikhail rose from his bed, tired, aching from the fall he’d taken when he’d tumbled of the balance beam section of the side road.. “Dumpling! It’s time for school!” He called to the third room of the flat’s upper floor. He got up reluctantly, picking out some black pants and a brown zipper sweater. He opened the window and smiled at the warmth of the air in the August breeze. In a few days it would be beautiful fall, where the leaves took on the colors of warmth, though Mikhail would still miss his birth month’s beauty and perfection.

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